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PROGRESS OF RURAL ELECTRIFICATION IN 1940

Broadcast by Paul Woodbridge, Rural Electrification Administration,
Monday, December 30, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period, National
Farm and Home Hour, over the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company.

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KADDERLY:

And in Washington we're going to speak of electricity....electricity
on the farm.

The year 1940 saw electricity brought to the farm homes of the United
States at an ever-speeded clip.

That is good news....for everyone.

Good news for the business men of rural America in whose stores and
shops there is a pulse of new vitality because farmers have put new electrical
equipment to work on their farms and in their homes.

Good news for the miner, the mechanic, the railroad man and the manu-
facturer....all of whom feel the spur of business advance produced by the
building and use of the new power lines in the country.

And most of all....good news for the farmer and every member of his
family because today electric light and electric power stand watch behind ten
million switches ready to lighten work on the farm and in the home....ready
to light the farmer's early rising, speed his son's and daughter's evening
study, hasten the after-supper chores, brighten the family's evening together.

In short....on the wings of electric power the opportunity to work
more productively and to live in greater comfort are coming faster today to
the farm people of the United States.

How much faster? And to how many farm homes? Here is a man who can
tell us....Paul Woodbridge of the Rural Electrification Administration.

WOODBIDGE:

Farm and Home friends, I report today for the administrator of the
Rural Electrification Administration....Mr. Harry Slattery.

My story is brief....for the salient facts are few...

Cooperatives organized ...

Power lines built ...

Farm homes wired ...

The juice turned on ...

...these are the blocks in the structure of rural electrification.
Within that structure is the greater story of what all the building means.
You will sense the drama and its significance.

(over)

But let me be reflective with you all for just one moment.

In Iowa sweet potatoes are cleaned by electricity, and a simple 100-watt bulb warms water for a farmer's poultry. From Maine to New Mexico, from the Imperial Valley of California to the plains of Florida, radios keep dairy cows contented and, believe it or not, farmers report practical returns in speeded milking and increased flow. In South Dakota a chick brooder mounted above his bed eases the pain of a farmer's rheumatism.

In Oregon electricity pumps water to irrigate a farmer's pasture land and he reports double the pasture from the same acreage when not irrigated.

In Arkansas an irrigated watermelon patch produces \$50 an acre at a cost for electric power of \$3.45.

From the line of Canada to the Cajun country of Louisiana electricity spins the cream separators, lights the lambing sheds, spins the grindstones and turns the feed grinders on the farms.

In forty-five states power from the REA farmer-owned cooperative high-lines, financed by the REA, speeds the work and lifts the burden of the farmer's day, lights his night for productive leisure.

These are simple, casual, highlights from the story of rural electrification development during 1940. Nineteen-forty was a year doubly significant to the rural electrification program. It marked the fifth anniversary of the federal rural electrification program and it saw the further integration of REA effort with the far-flung programs of the whole United States Department of Agriculture. This integration was initiated and will be perfected under President Roosevelt's second reorganization plan. It promises to speed on an ever-widening front the benefits of low-cost electric service to the people in the farm community of the United States.

Five years of REA's life have been the most fruitful in the brief history of rural electrification. These five years have seen central station electric service taken to nearly twice as many farms as in all the years between the birth of the electric power industry in 1882 and the dawn of 1935. A new art of building rural power lines has been developed.

Government, industry, and farm people alike have felt the growth of a new attitude toward this thing rural electrification and in the adaptation of the cooperative idea to the distribution of electric energy, America has seen the development of an important new factor in the agricultural, economic life of our country.

At year's end REA-financed electric systems are bringing low-cost electric service to 675,000 rural consumers. Of these 540,000 are farms, 135,000 are stores, factories, dairies, churches, mills, mines, and other business and social interests in the life of our rural communities. In this expanding job the farmers themselves have taken a most vital part. Their electric distribution cooperatives and their public power districts have carried the ball in this advance. The REA is the financial and spiritual and engineering coach behind the local teams that have won this progress for rural America.

And I think it proper, as we close the most fruitful chapter in the new book of rural electrification, to express for Mr. Slattery today to the hundreds of thousands of rural electric co-op members the gratitude and the greetings of the staff of the REA and of our colleagues and co-workers throughout all the Department of Agriculture. Theirs has been a tremendous job well done. They, in truth, have built the 166 thousand miles of line that have been reared against the skies of forty-five states during the past year. In their hands lies not only the challenge but the promise of speeding the service which they enjoy to every farm home in their communities that can use electricity wisely -- and I speak of both social as well as economic wisdom.

We greet 1941 in the knowledge that today nearly three farms in ten enjoy the boost to production and income and the stimulus to better living that follows as night the day the advance of electric service into rural areas. On the foundations of five years' building for the betterment of American agriculture, the building of a progress that reached a new peak in 1940, rural electrification is poised to produce new vitality in America's defense program, and to achieve even greater progress in the year ahead.

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